Southern Pacific Bulletin

AUGUST 1927

Icing a "Reefer"

Imperial Valley Ships Record Cantaloupe Crop

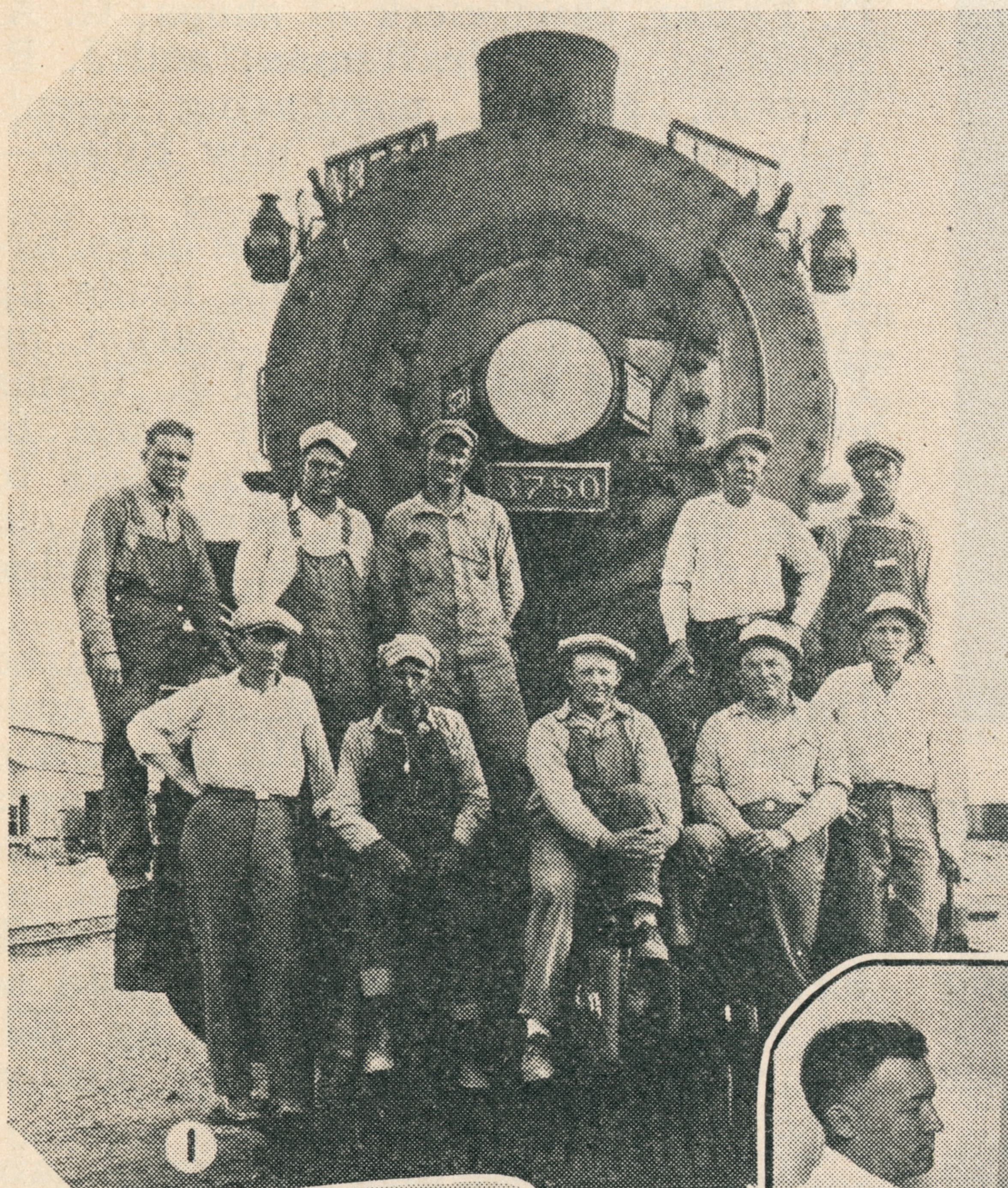
AS a silver anniversary celebration of the twenty-fifth year of the industry in this famous California district, the Imperial Valley is just bringing to a close the marketing of the greatest cantaloupe crop in its history.

On July 18 a total of 16,848 cars had been shipped from Brawley, El Centro, Calexico Westmoreland, Holtville, Imperial, and other growing centers of the valley. Last season a total of 14,135 cars were shipped to markets throughout the country, while the previous record was in 1924, when 16,045 cars were marketed. It is estimated that about 17,500 cars will be shipped this season.

This year saw faster schedules than ever before in effect to rush the highly perishable melons to markets in eastern cities, the new schedule from Brawley cut five hours in the running time to Chicago, thus making arrival in Chicago for seventh-day sales and assuring connections on fast afternoon freight trains to markets farther east.

The Pacific Fruit Express Company maintains icing facilities at Brawley, El Centro and Calexico, where the refrigerator cars loaded with cantaloupes are initially iced and reiced before their departure. At height of the season between 500 and 600 men are employed at these stations in the icing of cars. All east-bound shipments are again iced at Yuma, Tucson and El Paso. At Yuma and Tucson the Pacific Fruit Express Company maintains and operates icing platforms at each station where a total of 140 cars can be reiced at one time, each car in an average of one minute. The ice required for refrigerating a crop of 17,500 cars on the Southern Pacific (Pacific Lines) alone will aggregate nearly 200,000 tons.

The present season also saw moved from Imperial Valley the longest cantaloupe train on record, when on June 21 a "melon bloc" of 149 refrigerator cars laden with freshly-picked cantaloupes moved from Braw-



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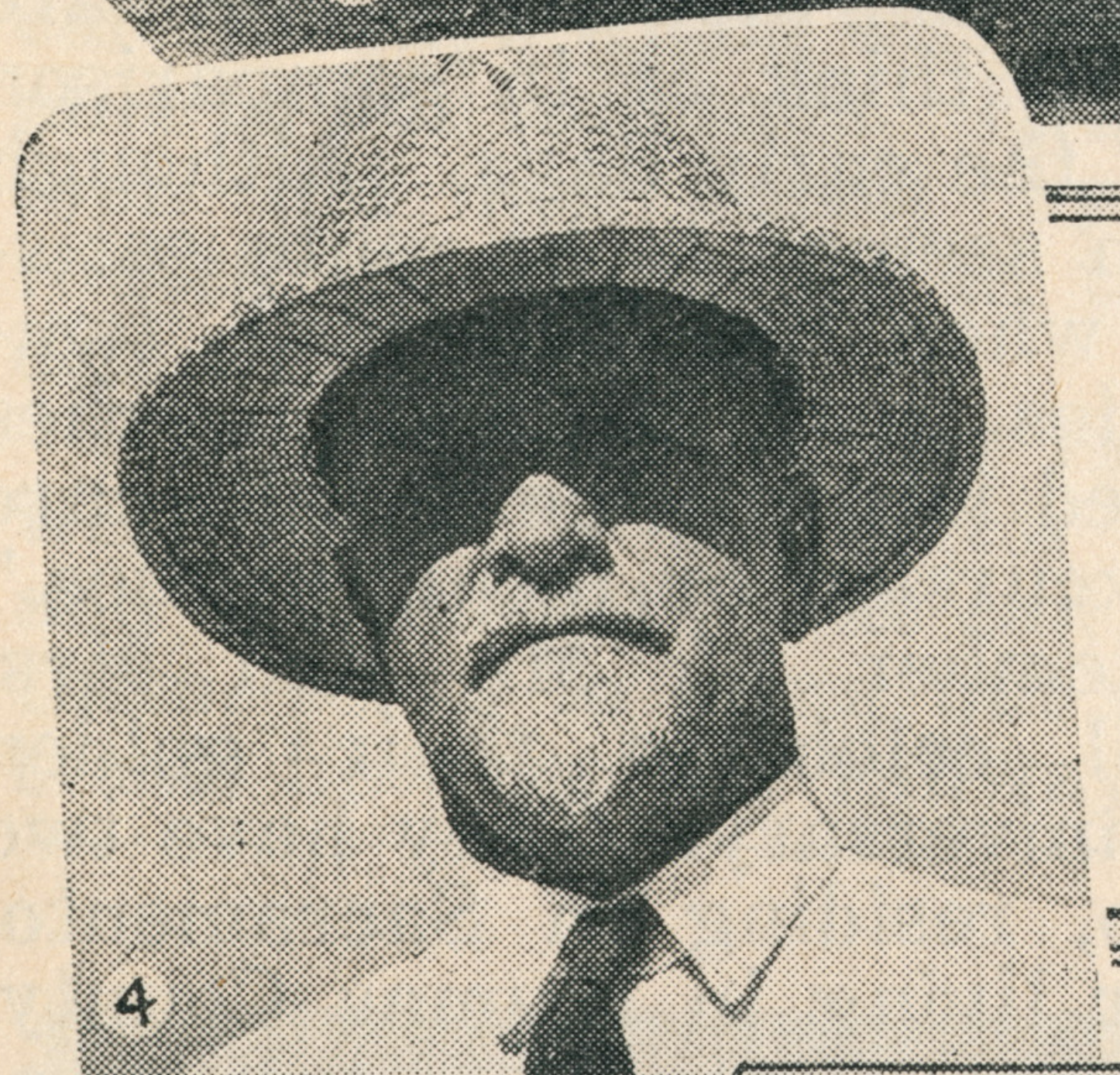

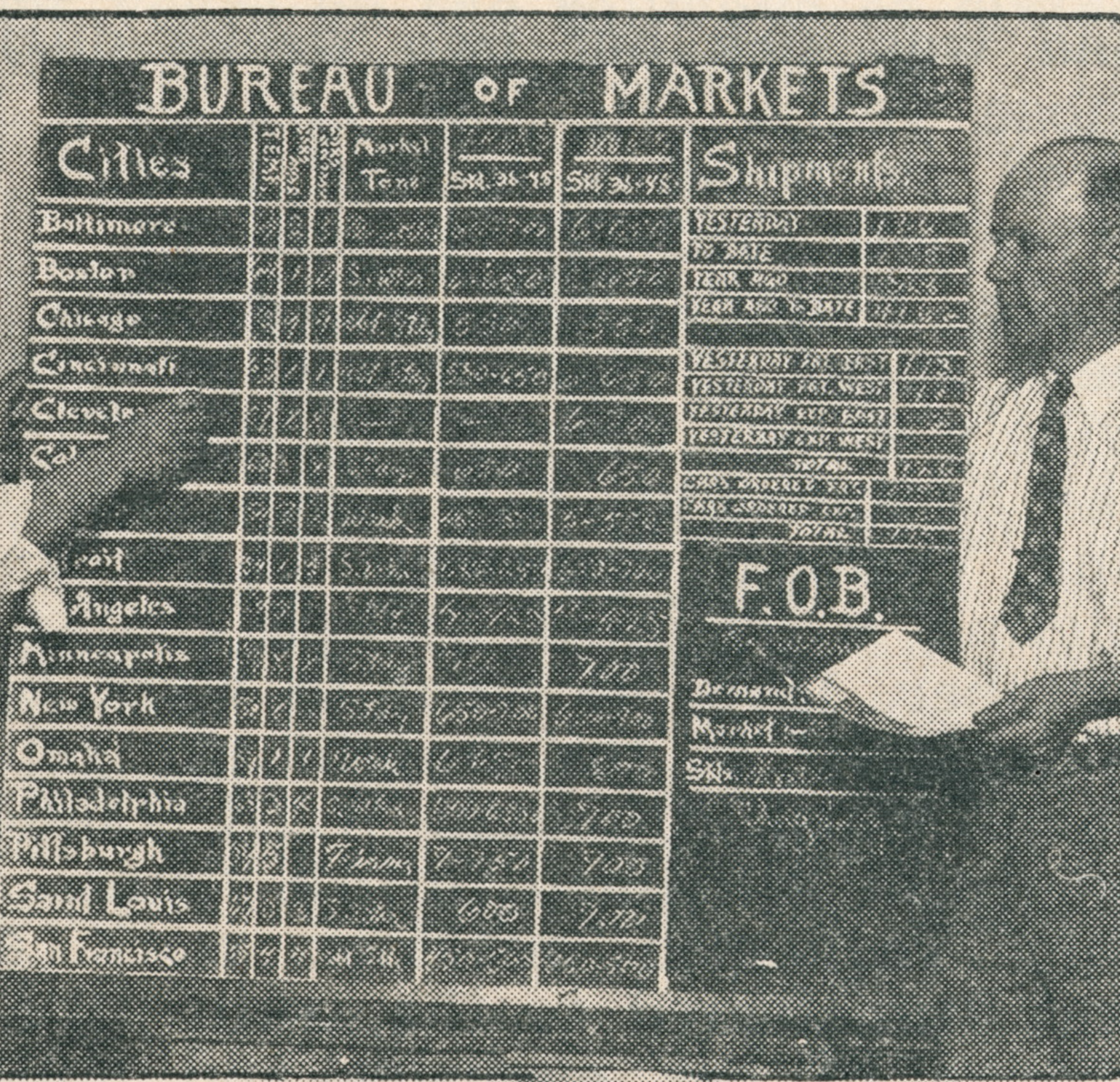

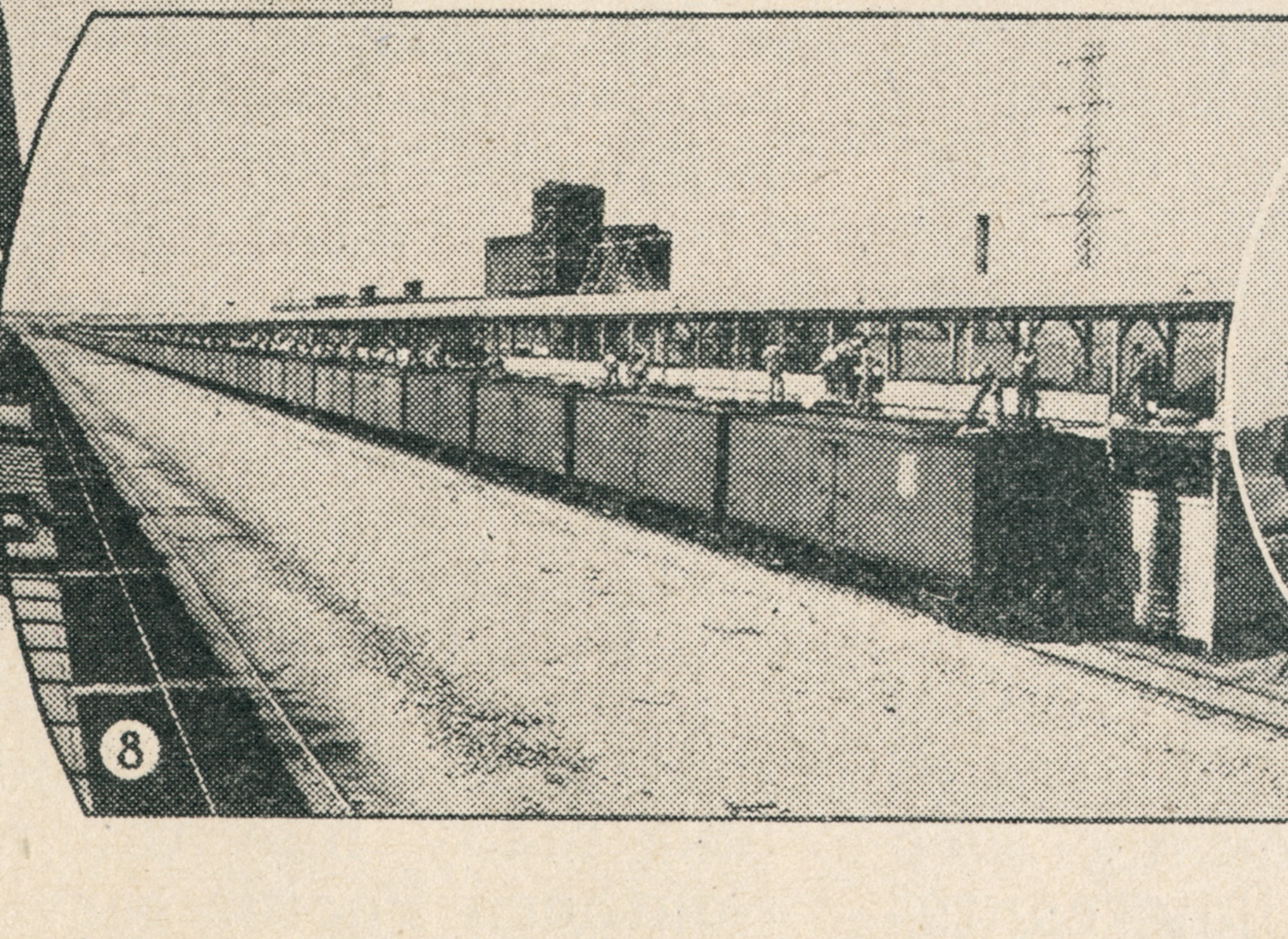

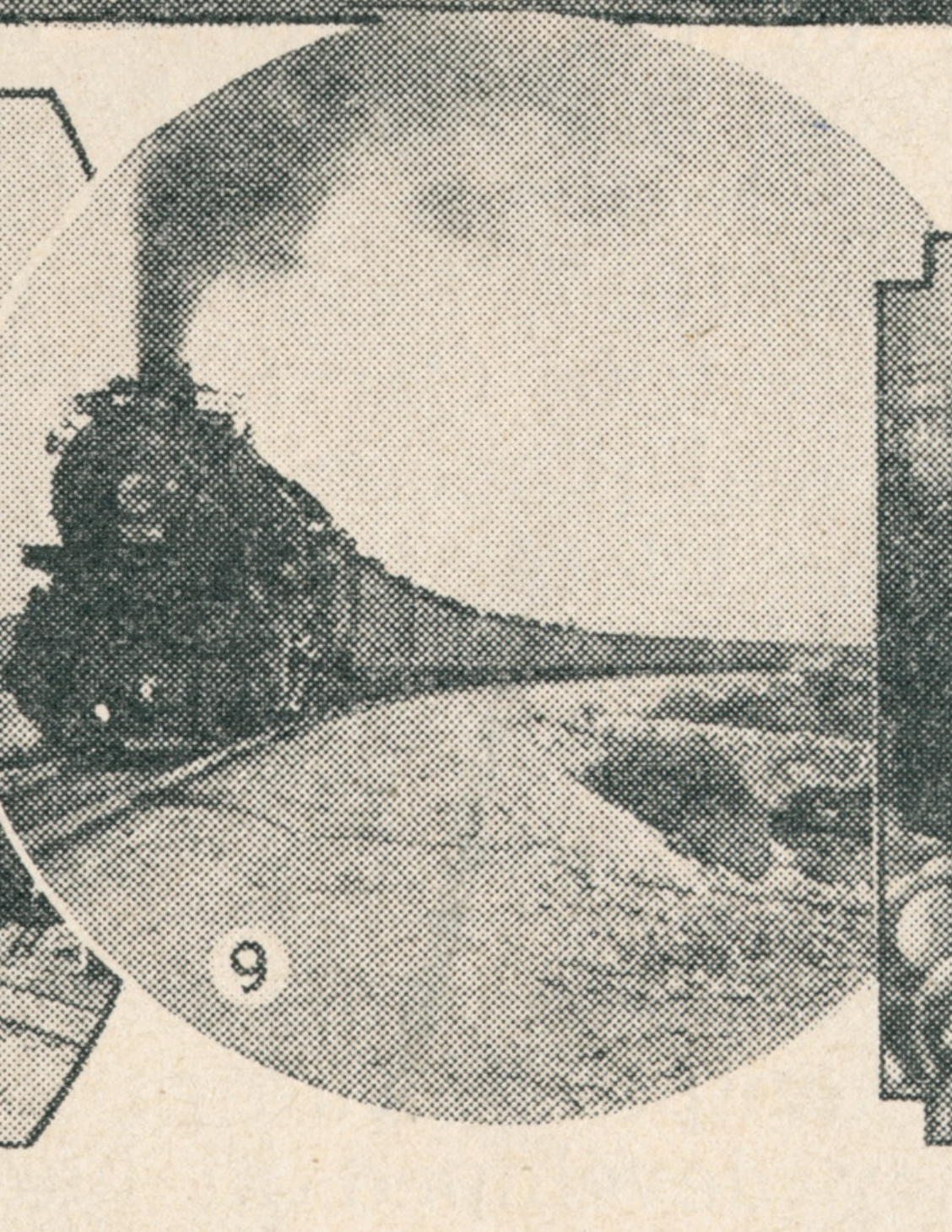

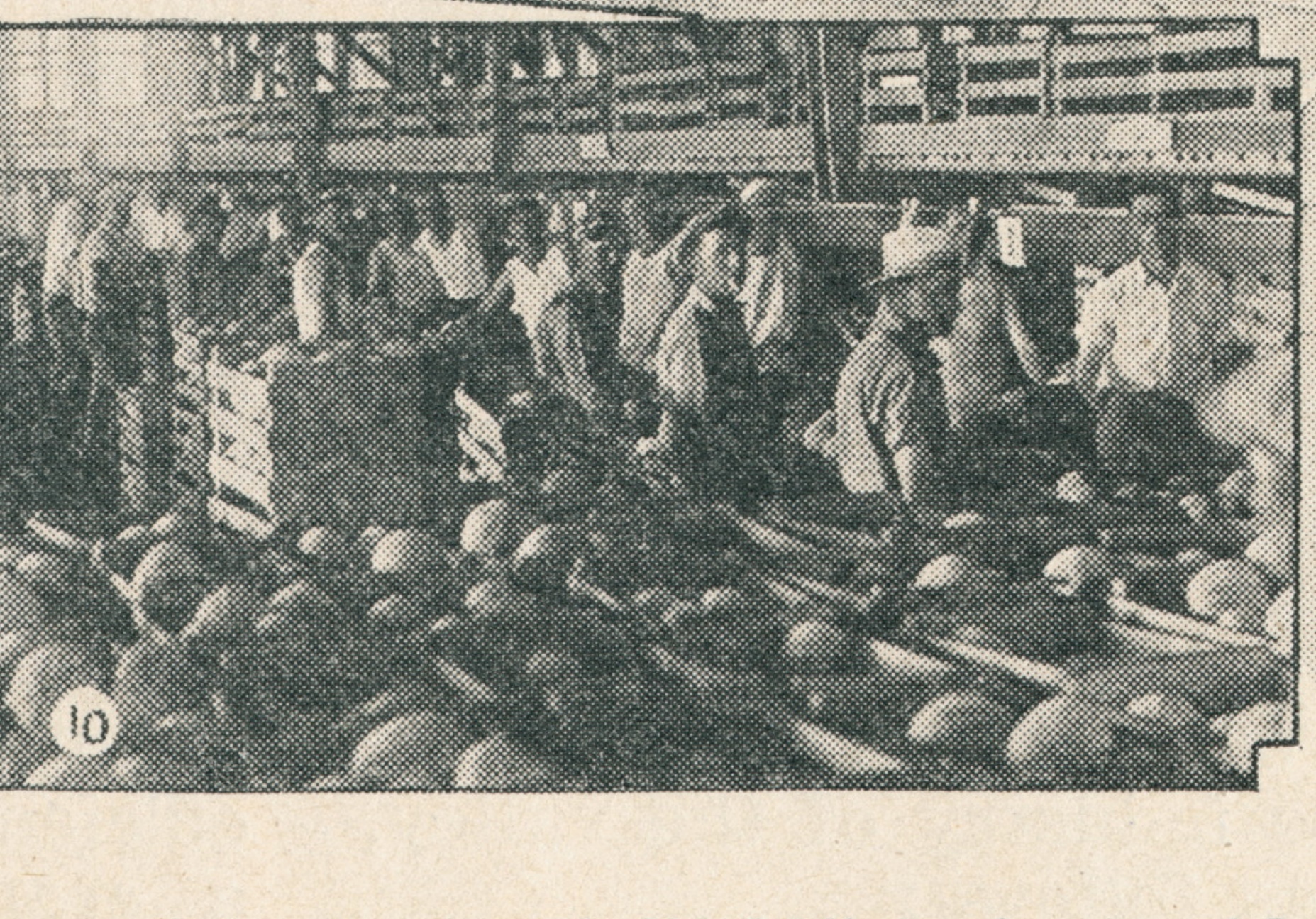

1. Crew handling one of the 124 car train carrying cantaloupes out of the Imperial Valley. Top row, left to right—J. W. Hill, brakeman; N. D. Pugh, fireman; R. W. Benson, engineer; C. C. Brooks, conductor; Wm. F. Reese, brakeman. Lower row—C. H. Cox, L. A. Fraser and Geo. F. Burke, brakemen; Ben S. Baumann, trainmaster; and R. T. Aird, assistant trainmaster. 2. I. Dodge Hale, "daddy" of the cantaloupe industry in Imperial Valley, who was honored at celebration commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of shipping the first cantaloupes from that district. 3. Freight traffic crew at Brawley. Standing, left to right—F. J. Morin, chief traveling weight accountant; Steve Lefner, claim clerk; C. L. Kane, P. F. E. clerk; John Brady, warehouse foreman; Thos. Wilcox, P. F. E. clerk; W. C. Eaton, agent; J. A. Coveney, traveling weight accountant; W. G. Lowery, counter clerk; E. D. Baugh, car clerk; J. E. Landels, traveling weight accountant. Kneeling—F. Millan, bill clerk; A. Aparicio, bill clerk; H. A. Harris, assistant car clerk; W. J. Harvill, P. F. E. clerk; W. R. Loescher, assistant cashier. 4. Tom Elliott, who has done much in the interest of the cantaloupe crop. 5. U. S. Bureau of Markets men with chart which keeps growers posted as to prices, shipments and market conditions. 6. Dorothy Coburn is assisting F. K. Shilling, center, manager of the Los Angeles station restaurant, and Baker John Relm, in decorating the birthday cake which was a feature of the anniversary celebration. 7. W. C. Eaton, agent at Brawley, is a pioneer in handling the cantaloupes, having been at Brawley since 1905, except for one year at Pasadena. 8. Pacific Fruit Express icing platform for 140 cars at Yuma. 9. Fruit bloc of 124 cars loaded with cantaloupes en route to Eastern markets June 21. 10. Scene in one of the many packing sheds. 11. Ben S. Baumann, trainmaster at Brawley, who is completing his eighth season in directing the work of shipping the cantaloupes and to whom much credit is due for the general satisfaction expressed among shippers.

ley to Yuma on the first lap of the journey East.

This record cantaloupe train was in charge of Conductor C. C. Brooks, Engineer R. W. Benson, Fireman N. D. Pugh, and Brakemen C. H. Cox, George F. Burke, J. W. Hill, Wm. F. Rose and L. A. Fraser. Trains of 124 cars each were handled daily during the peak of the season.

Throughout the season the close cooperation of Southern Pacific officials, so necessary in the successful transportation of this great crop, was maintained with growers and shippers.

The railroad was highly complimented by shippers at a novel silver anniversary celebration held in Brawley on June 23. A monster banquet, at which Dodge Hale, "dean" of the cantaloupe growers, was the guest of honor, was held in the gardens of the Planters Hotel, on the spot where 25 years ago the first cantaloupes were grown and packed for shipment.

Birthday Cake

A huge birthday cake was baked for the occasion at the Los Angeles station restaurant by Baker John Relm, under the direction of Manager F. K. Shilling. It was decorated with 25 candles and bore the inscription in icing, "Hail Hale. Compliments Southern Pacific Dining Car Department." The presentation of the large cake to Hale during the banquet, attended by more than 400 growers, business men and railroad representatives, was a feature of the celebration.

Officers of the Southern Pacific who materially contributed to the success of the cantaloupe celebration included: F. E. Scott, assistant freight traffic manager; George J. Blech, general freight agent; T. H. Williams, assistant general manager; C. L. McFaul, assistant passenger traffic manager; G. E. Gaylord, superintendent Los Angeles Division; V. F. Frizzell, district freight and passenger agent at El Centro; and W. C. Eaton, agent at Brawley.

The cantaloupes produced this year in Imperial Valley were the best ever in quality. Cool weather during the early part of the season resulted in a gradual increase in the volume of melons marketed.

The present season marked the eighth consecutive year that Trainmaster Ben S. Baumann has maintained headquarters at Brawley to supervise the transportation of the cantaloupe crop from the valley. Baumann was aided this season by Assistant Trainmaster R. T. Aird and a large crew of trained workers.

A feature article in the Los Angeles Times on Sunday, July 3, on the cantaloupe industry of the valley, read in part as follows:

"From the small beginning twenty-five years ago, the crop has increased each year until now from 35,000 to 40,000 acres are planted annually, with shipments running in the neighborhood of 15,000 carloads, largely to eastern states.

"Growers and shippers from many sections of the United States have studied the methods of the Imperial Valley shippers and of the railroad as an example of the great degree of efficiency developed in handling such a crop. In fact, the valley cantaloupe crop stands out as the biggest, most-rapidly handled, the most perishable and the most concentrated freight deal in the world. From a railroad section forty miles in length, this big crop is handled each year in a period of about six weeks. For this reason the valley cantaloupe crop and its handling stands as a model for other growing sections."

Never Missed Payroll in More than 51 Years

DURING the 51 years 8 months he served the Company, most of the time in clerical positions, William J. Fuller, car shop clerk at Sacramento Shops, never missed a payroll and was sick but two weeks during those years. He has just been retired on pension, having passed his seventieth birthday on June 18.

W. J. Fuller, car clerk at Sacramento, sitting in the easy chair which was one of the several gifts presented him by employes following his retirement on pension after more than half a century of service.

Mr. Fuller's long service has all been spent at Sacramento and he is widely known among the veterans on the Sacramento, Salt Lake, Stockton and Western divisions. After completing a business college course in October, 1875, he went to work as a timekeeper in the freight car repair shops under Foreman W. B. Ludlow, where he remained for 19 years. He then requested out-door work and was transferred to the train yard in charge of car cleaners and station car force. In 1903 he became motive power and car record clerk, and in February, 1917, took his recent position as clerk in Car Shop No. 9.

From real pioneer stock, Fuller was born near Oleta, then known as Fiddletown, in 1857. His parents had crossed the plains five years before and had followed the rush to various mining camps. In 1872 young Fuller went to Sacramento and started work for Denel & Griffiths, dry goods merchants, who were successors to Chas. Crocker, one of the famous "Big Four" who built the Central Pacific.

"When I came to Sacramento in '72," says Fuller, "the general offices of the Central Pacific were on the upper floor of 54 K Street. At this office the employes drew their monthly wage from Paymaster J. M. Hanford. Later the office was moved to San Francisco and Mr. Hanford made trips out on the lines in the pay-car.

"In 1875 the officers located at Sacramento were: J. A. Fillmore, superintendent; T. R. Jones, train dispatcher; H. B. Breckenfeld, chief clerk; Cal Stevens, freight agent; A. J. Stevens, master mechanic; Benj. Welch, master car repairer; Newton H. Foster, chief clerk of shops; G. A. Stoddard, chief draftsman; and J. R. Watson, general purchasing agent. Only two of those are now living—Mr. Jones and Mr. Foster.

"Passenger trains in those days, arriving and departing, were made up from the old passenger station on Front Street between I and J. Trains over the old Cal. P., en route to San Francisco via Vallejo, used to back out of the depot over the old wye, and leave over the toll bridge across the river.

"Emigrant travel on the mixed trains was quite heavy. The emigrant cars were fitted with upper and lower wooden berths, passengers having to furnish their own mattresses, which mostly consisted of calico sewed together and stuffed with hay. These mattresses were sold to passengers en route East by Bill Steinman, proprietor of the station lunch room.

"Comforts of modern travel are marvelous to think of in comparison to those of the early days. Although people then seemed to be quite satisfied, even when flat cars with temporary sides and wooden benches were pressed into service to take care of large excursion or picnic parties."

On September 17, Mr. and Mrs. Fuller will celebrate their golden wedding anniversary. They have two sons, Elmo, residing in Sacramento, and Walter living in Plumas County.

Many remembrances were presented the retiring veteran by his railroad friends, including an arm chair, console radio completely equipped, floor lamp, smoking stand and complete set, including pipe, tobacco and cigars.

NINE-YEAR-OLD TRAVELER IS PLEASED WITH CASCADE

Mrs. G. H. Fairchild of Sacramento had many fine things to say about Southern Pacific service in a letter to District Passenger Agent D. R. Owen, following a trip taken by her nine-year-old daughter on the new Cascade Limited. The little girl made the round trip alone to Seattle, and, while she was given every attention by members of the train crew, she was particularly anxious to say something nice about Maid Mary Middleton.